

Wesleyan mission

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STATEMENT

OF THE

WESLEYAN METHODIST

PLAN, OBJECT, AND EFFECTS

OF THE

Wesleyan Missions

IN

THE WEST INDIES.

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PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE WESLEYAN
METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

1824.

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S T A T E M E N T,

&c. &c.

THE Society entitled THE WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY is composed of all benefactors to its funds of ten pounds, and of all subscribers to the amount of one guinea annually; and has *Auxiliary* and *Branch Societies*, in almost every part of the United Kingdom.

The Missions which are supported by its liberality, are established in all the British West India Colonies, and in several of the foreign islands; in the British American possessions; in Western and Southern Africa; in Ceylon, and India; in New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, New Zealand, and the Friendly Islands; in France, Gibraltar, Palestine, and the darker parts of Ireland.

The number of Missionaries employed, exclusive of catechists and schoolmasters, is 164, of which number 50 are employed in the West India Colonies.

The West India Mission was commenced under the direction of the late Rev. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Societies, in the year 1786, and was for many years principally conducted by the late Rev. Dr. Coke, who under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference frequently visited the Colonies, superintended the different Missions, and, when in England, made extraordinary personal exertions in collecting subscriptions for their support from the benevolent of all classes, besides expending large sums out of his private estate for the same object.

These Missions are under the immediate management of a Committee of ministers and gentlemen, whose names will be found in the Annual Reports, and are supported by the donations and subscriptions of benevolent persons at home and abroad, the detail of which is annually given in the accounts appended to the printed Reports of the Committee.

No private interest of any kind or in any degree is involved in this Society. It originated and is founded in the desire to benefit mankind in their best interests, by the diffusion of Christian knowledge and the establishment of religious ordinances in parts of the world where the inhabitants are wholly, or in a great and painful degree, destitute of them. The Society seeks

no party objects, enters into no cultivated field, and builds not on the foundation of others.

As the present publication chiefly respects the West India Missions, the information it is intended to convey will be most clearly communicated under different heads.

APPOINTMENT OF MISSIONARIES.—The persons who act under the direction of the Committee as Missionaries, are persons chiefly sent out from home, and are either candidates, or such as are actually employed in, the regular ministry of the religious body with which the Society is connected. Of that body they are all members, and known to be persons of good report and pious habits; and before they are sent abroad they undergo several examinations both in the places from which they are recommended, and by Committees in London. The utmost care is taken to send out none but persons duly qualified, and of decided and confirmed character; and though many of the Missionaries thus employed are young men, the instances have been exceedingly few in which they have disappointed the hopes of the Committee.

INSTRUCTIONS.—A body of printed Instructions, a copy of which may be had by any gen-

tleman on application, is given to every Missionary, to which, previous to his ordination, his solemn assent is required; and the observance of which is the *condition* of his being employed. These instructions relate to his personal moral conduct; his ministerial diligence and fidelity; his loyalty, and respectful submission to the local authorities; and other similar subjects. Against intermeddling with the *civil affairs* and *local disputes* of the colonies, he is especially cautioned, and admonished to apply himself solely to his religious duties. This part of the Instructions we subjoin.

As in the Colonies in which you are called to labour, a great proportion of the inhabitants are in a state of slavery, the Committee most strongly call to your recollection, what was so fully stated to you when you were accepted as a Missionary to the West Indies, that your sole business is to promote the moral and religious improvement of the slaves to whom you may have access, without in the least degree, in public or private, interfering with their civil condition. On all persons in the state of slavery, you are diligently and explicitly to enforce the same exhortations which the Apostles of our Lord administered to the slaves of ancient nations, when by their ministry they embraced Christianity. Eph. vi. 5—8, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to

men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Col. iii. 22—25, " Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men: knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

You are directed to avail yourselves of every opportunity to extend your labours among the slaves of the islands where you may be stationed; but you are in no case to visit the slaves of any plantation without the permission of the owner or manager; nor are the times which you may appoint for their religious services to interfere with their owners employ; nor are you to suffer any protracted meetings in the evening, nor even at negro burials, on any account whatever. In all these cases you are to meet even unreasonable prejudices, and attempt to disarm suspicions, however groundless, so far as you can do it consistently with your duties as faithful and laborious Ministers of the Gospel,

The Committee caution you against engaging in any of the civil disputes or local politics of the Colony to which you may be appointed, either verbally, or by correspondence with any persons at home, or in the Colonies. The whole period of your temporary residence in the West Indies, is to be filled up with the proper work of your Mission. You are not to become parties in any civil quarrel; but are to " please all men for their good to edification;" intent upon the solemn work of your office, and upon that eternal state, in the views of which the Committee trust you will ever think and act.

In cases of opposition to your ministry, which may arise on the part of individuals, or of any of the colonial legislatures, a meek and patient spirit and conduct are recommended to you. You will in particular guard against all angry and resentful speeches, and in no case attempt to inflame your Societies and hearers with resentment against your persecutors or opposers. Your business, in such cases, after every prudent means of obtaining relief has failed in your own hands, is with the Committee at home; who will immediately take such steps as may secure to you that protection, from a mild and tolerant Government, which they hope your peaceable and pious conduct, your labours, and successes, will ever merit for you.

DUTY.—Few of the Mission stations in the West Indies are solitary ones. Two, three, and sometimes four Missionaries are appointed to each, the senior of whom is the Superintendent, and is charged with the oversight of the rest. In most of the towns a chapel has been erected, and, in some islands, in several of the country places. The public services of these chapels, which consist of the reading of the Liturgy of the Church of England, and sermons; besides baptisms, marriages, and in some places burials; are performed every Sunday, in the forenoon and in the evening. In addition to these, there are meetings of those who are members of the Society, in classes, early in the morning, and betwixt the services in the afternoon, for more particular and personal instruction in religion; with examinations of those who apply for baptism, and who

wish to be admitted to the Lord's Supper; so that from daybreak to the close of the evening service the time of the Missionaries is, on the Sunday, very laboriously occupied. On the mornings and evenings of the week-days they are also employed, with scarcely any vacancy, in catechising children, either in towns, or on the estates to which they have access; in giving personal instruction to the adults; and in holding public service on estates, or in the country chapels, at such times as the people can best attend. Their duties are exceedingly arduous; and the health and the lives of many Missionaries have been sacrificed to the exertions thus required in such a climate, since the commencement in 1786.

DISCIPLINE AS TO SOCIETIES.—As soon as the public worship of Almighty God is commenced in any place, either in a chapel, or on an estate, in such building as may be employed for that purpose, the Missionary endeavours to collect classes of adults as catechumens, to be more particularly instructed in the principles of religion. These, after sufficient instruction, and trial, to ascertain whether they have put away their vices, and are living righteous, sober, and godly lives, are baptised, and admitted into society, have their names recorded as members,

and are admitted to the Lord's Supper. A printed ticket is given, quarterly, to each, by the minister himself, with suitable advice, as the renewal of his membership ; but it is withheld from those who have been immoral, or negligent in their attendance at the ordinances of religion, who are thereby disgraced and excluded. This is the practice in our Societies at home ; and, for want of being understood, has given rise, occasionally, to some objections in the Colonies where the Missions have not been long established. The ticket is, however, no more than a visible token of fellowship with a religious body, and entitles the person who has it to attend the sacraments, or meetings of the Society, at his own, or at any chapel where he is not personally known ; and the renewing of it quarterly, with the date of the month and year, enables the Missionary to exclude improper and incorrigible persons. This circumstance of excluding from the Society all persons guilty of misconduct, at least until manifest repentance, and a new probation has been undergone, has always been found a very powerful auxiliary in keeping up in the minds of the slaves a proper sense of morality, by attaching credit and subjoining privileges to it ; and in impressing them with this truth, of importance to all, that vital Christianity is not a mere profession, but

the means of the entire conversion of the affections and conduct. The quarterly tickets are the same for all the West India Societies, and are printed and sent out by the Committee, so that they can never be the sign of any local association.

In the older and larger Societies, as the Missionaries cannot act as catechists to all, nor, as leaders of classes, give religious instruction and counsel to all the seriously disposed adults ; white persons, being members of our Society, or persons of colour, male and female, or, when these cannot be found, the oldest and best instructed of the negroes, are appointed to act in these capacities as their time may allow. All these are under the constant superintendence of the Missionaries, and are removed if negligent, or guilty of misconduct. A meeting of the leaders with the Missionaries takes place weekly, when the conduct of the members of Society is reported and examined, differences composed, and persons charged with improper conduct reprobred, admonished, or expelled, as the case may be. At these meetings the conduct of all the members passes under review ; the great object of bringing the members of Society into a moral state, worthy of the profession of Christianity, being constantly kept in view.

The following extract from the Committee's instructions to Missionaries will show the terms on which only they are allowed to admit, and to continue, any of their hearers members of the Society.

Where Societies are already formed, you are required to watch over them with the fidelity of those who must give up their account to Him who hath purchased them with his blood, and in whose Providence they are placed under your care. Your labours must be constantly directed to improve them in the knowledge of Christianity, and to enforce upon them the experience and practice of its doctrines and duties, without intermingling doubtful controversies in your administrations ; being mainly anxious, that those over whom you have pastoral care, should clearly understand the principal doctrines of the Scriptures, feel their renovating influence upon their hearts, and become " holy in all manner of conversation and godliness." And in order to this, we recommend that your sermons should consist chiefly of clear expositions of the most important truths of Holy Writ, enforced with affection and fervour on the consciences and conduct of those that hear you ; that you frequently and familiarly explain portions of the Scriptures ; and that, as extensively as you possibly can, you introduce the method of teaching children, and the less instructed of the adult slaves and others, by the excellent catechisms with which you are furnished.

It is enforced upon you, that you continue no person as members of your Societies, whose " conversation is not as becometh the Gospel of Christ :" That any member of Society who may relapse into his former habits, and become a polygamist, an adulterer, or an unclean person ; who shall be idle and disorderly ; disobedient to his

owner (if a slave); who shall steal, or be in any other way immoral or irreligious, shall be put away, after due admonition, and proper attempts to reclaim him from the “error of his way.”

Before you receive any person into Society, you shall be satisfied of his desire to become acquainted with the Religion of Christ, and to obey it; and if he has not previously been under Christian instruction, nor baptized, you are, before his admission as a member, diligently to teach him the Christian faith, and the obligations which he takes upon himself by baptism; so as to be assured of his having obtained such knowledge of the principles of religion, and such belief of them, as to warrant you to administer to him that ordinance. Beside this, no person is to be admitted into Society, without being placed first on trial, for such time as shall be sufficient to prove whether his conduct has been reformed, and that he has wholly renounced all those vices to which he may have been before addicted.

You are to consider the children of the negroes and coloured people of your Societies and Congregations as a part of your charge; and it is recommended to you, wherever it is practicable and prudent, to establish Sunday or other schools for their instruction. It is to be considered by you as a very important part of your duty as a Missionary, to catechise them as often as you conveniently can, at stated periods; and to give your utmost aid to their being brought up in Christian knowledge, and in industrious and moral habits.

As many of the negroes live in a state of polygamy, or in a promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, your particular exertions are to be directed to the discountenancing and correcting of these vices, by pointing out the evil, both in public and in private, and by maintaining the strictest discipline in the Societies. No man, living in a state of

polygamy, is to be admitted a member, or even on trial, who will not consent to live with one woman as his wife, to whom you shall join him in matrimony, or ascertain that this rite has been performed by some other minister; and the same rule is to be applied, in the same manner, to a woman proposing to become a member of Society. No female, living in a state of concubinage with any person, is to be admitted into Society so long as she continues in that sin.

This is the discipline of our Societies. In most of the older Missions it has long been very efficaciously and happily established ; but it is easy to conceive, that where the instruments who are wanted to act subordinately to the Missionary are but rarely to be met with, and some of them not so well qualified as could be wished ; and also, where the circumstances of many of the slaves are unfriendly to regular attendance upon the means of religious instruction ; the object has in the more recent Missions been but partially accomplished. That it is practicable has, however, been demonstrated upon a large and encouraging scale, and nothing is wanting, next to the divine blessing, but more agents, and the friendly co-operation of owners and other persons of influence to accomplish it in any place. The number of persons, of whom at least nineteen out of twenty, we have reason to believe, are slaves, thus placed in our Societies in the West Indies, and under this course of moral discipline, is upwards of 26,000. Those who attend

our public religious services and are not members, but who are receiving, more or less, from the ministration of the Missionaries, the knowledge of Christian doctrines and principles, are abundantly more numerous; and, with the children under instruction, and the members of our societies are not overrated, in the pamphlet lately published by Sir George Rose, at 80,000 persons.

DISCIPLINE OF MISSIONARIES.—The Wesleyan Missionaries, so far from being, as sometimes represented, independent, without control, and without responsibility, are under the following regulations.

1. They are ministers in connection with our body at home, with which they can no longer be united than whilst they conform to the same rules of conduct, as those which are enjoined upon all our ministers.
2. They are under the special instructions before mentioned, as Missionaries, and can only be employed in that office so long as they obey them; and should they be dismissed, they would not be received by any of our congregations, and must therefore return home, where they would at once be excluded from our body.
3. They are in constant correspondence with the Committee, under whose directions, and

advices on special occasions they are required implicitly to act.

4. In every station the senior is the Superintendent of the rest; is responsible for their faithful discharge of their duty; and must report it.
5. A number of Mission Stations form what we term a District, the ministers of which meet together annually, the chairman of the meeting being appointed in England. The principal business of this District Meeting is to examine into the conduct and character of each Missionary; to read over the General Instructions, and report whether they have been observed by all; to give an account of the religious state and prospects of each Mission Station; and to suggest to the Committee whatever may appear necessary to their success. Minutes of every District Meeting are kept by the secretary, and are read over and signed in the meeting, by the chairman, and transmitted to the Committee. These documents are preserved in our Mission Office, and afford a view of the *interior* management of our Mission, which any respectable gentleman, who will take the trouble to call, is at liberty at any time to inspect. The Committee have nothing to conceal; and these *original* minutes,

taken at the meeting of the Districts for many years past, are the most unexceptionable evidences they can offer of the nature of our system, and of the objects which are steadily pursued. The stations of the Missionaries are changed every two or three years, and their appointments are regulated by directions from home. Where there are several Mission Stations, as in Jamaica, the same Missionary may be continued several years in the same island, but in different parts; otherwise the change is from island to island.

The number of our West India Districts is four. The *Jamaica District* comprehends *eight* Mission Stations in that island, and has within it twelve Missionaries. The Windward Islands are divided into the *Antigua* and *St. Vincent's* Districts; the first comprises the Stations in Antigua, Dominica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Christopher's, St. Eustatius, St. Bartholomew's, St. Martin's, Anguilla, Tortola, and the Virgin Islands, and has in it *twenty-one* Missionaries.

The *St. Vincent's District* comprises St. Vincent's, Grenada, Trinidad, Barbadoes, Tobago, Demerara, and St. Lucie, and has in it fifteen Missionaries.

The Bahama District, comprises New Providence, Eleuthera, Harbour Island, Abaco, Turk's

Island, and Bermudas, and has in it *six* Missionaries.

It will be seen, from the above statement, that all the Missionaries employed are constantly responsible to the Committee and to the Wesleyan Conference; and that they are under their direction. The Committee know the sphere of all their labours; the circumstances of their Station; and the character and conduct of each.

CORRESPONDENCE.—The Missionaries have been by some persons supposed to be agents of societies and individuals at home, whose attention is directed to the civil concerns of the Colonies. This is not correct. They go out, as we have stated, instructed not to interfere in these questions; and they are prohibited from correspondence of this kind with any but the Committee, who indeed never make enquiries of this nature, except when circumstances arise to connect them directly with the operations of the Mission. The letters of the Missionaries to the Committee are for the most part solely on the religious objects and circumstances of their Missions. The following is an abstract from their General Instructions on this point.

The Committee caution you against engaging in any of the civil disputes or local politics of the colony to which you may be appointed, either verbally, or by *correspondence*.

with any persons at home, or in the Colonies. The whole period of your temporary residence in the West Indies is to be filled up with the proper work of your Mission. You are not to become parties in any civil quarrel; but are to "please all men for their good to edification;" intent upon the solemn work of your office, and upon that eternal state, in the views of which the Committee trust you will ever think and act.

FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE.—The sum allowed for the support of each Missionary is fixed by the Committee, according as he is single or married, and if married, according to the number of his children. These allowances differ as the expence of living is greater or less in the different Colonies; and are, for a married man, exclusive of an allowance for each child, from £130. per annum to £250; and for a single man from £100. to £180.

These are the very moderate allowances made by the Committee, with the exception of expences arising from house-rent, sickness, removals ordered by the Committee, and other travelling expences arising out of our itinerant system. In the older Missions, these allowances are in part raised by the public collections made in the chapels; by the donations of respectable persons; by allowances made by proprietors as an acknowledgement for their labours on their estates; and by the small weekly subscriptions

of such of the members of the Society as can afford it. Whatever is thus raised abroad, serves to lighten the pressure upon the Society's funds at home, and enables it to send out additional Missionaries to old Stations, or to occupy new ones in those parts of the Islands which are not under instruction. But after all, the large deficiencies which remain unprovided for in the moderate fixed allowances made for the support of each Missionary; the expences of passages out, and the outfits; the passages home of disabled Missionaries; provision for widows and orphans; grants for the erection, repair, and enlargement of chapels; create a large annual demand upon the Society, which for Missions so eminently useful is cheerfully offered by the subscribers at home, and cheerfully voted by the Committee. It is however to be observed, that all the monies raised on the Missions are regularly accounted for to the Committee. No Missionary can raise contributions for himself; nor is allowed to receive donations, except for the Mission. Stewards, generally respectable white, or coloured free persons, are appointed yearly in every Station, who keep the accounts of receipts and expenditures for the Station with accuracy, and transmit them, signed by themselves, to the Committee. These accounts are from year to year, and go into the minutest

details, so that to a farthing the Committee can shew the receipt and expenditure of every Station. The regulation of our finances cannot be more complete or guarded ; but the Committee must do their Missionaries the justice to say, that a body of more disinterested, as well as laborious men, were never employed. They cheerfully devote their days to the work of doing good, without the possibility of gaining more than their current maintenance ; nor have they any prospect in age and disability more than a trifling annuity, which arises from a fund to which they are annual subscribers out of their own pockets, or any small grant which the Committee at the time may think it proper to make for long and faithful services.

It has sometimes been asked, Are contributions for the support of the Missions required from the slaves ? To this we reply, that in the congregational collections all, whether slaves or free, are at liberty to contribute what they see fit, and the amount is taken account of by the stewards of each Society, and accounted for to the Committee as above stated. From the poor members of the Society nothing is required ; but many who can afford it pay a penny, three half-pence, or two-pence per week, and what they are disposed at the quarterly visitations for the renewal of the *tickets* before explained : and this

is encouraged, not so much for the sake of the amount raised, but on the general principle, that as they are able, we account it the duty of all established religious societies to assist in supporting their own religious institutions, and thus to enable the Mission Fund to send help to the entirely destitute; and also, because we find that their trifling contributions makes them take a livelier interest in a work, in part supported by themselves. This principle is in human nature; and all proprietors whose estates our Missionaries regularly attend, and where Societies are formed, agree with us, that it is far better to allow these trifling contributions, than for the proprietor to displace them by any act of liberality of his own. All this is, however, a matter of choice with the negroes. It is received only, trifling as it is, from those who are able to pay it; and there are *few religious* negroes, whose circumstances have not been materially improved:—most of them possess a little property. This money, as well as the congregational collections, goes into the hands of the stewards, and is in the same manner accounted for to the Committee. It is not the Missionary who is benefited by either, but the fund, which is relieved by the proportion of amount, however small it may be.

DOCTRINES.—The doctrines taught by the Missionaries are those of the body of Wesleyan Methodists at home, with whom they are connected; and it is sufficient to describe them, to say that we do not know that they differ at all from those of the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England, if the 17th Article on Predestination be not Calvinistically interpreted—for the Wesleyan Methodists are not Calvinists.

MISREPRESENTATIONS.—Of these we have had often to complain, and though it is no pleasant employment, we are obliged in justice to put ourselves right with the public, before whom we are so often charged with mischievous designs, or as undesignedly doing great mischief.

We indeed think, that, as a Missionary Society, we are entitled to stand on higher ground at this time of day, than a merely defensive position. For more than thirty years we have had Missionaries employed in the Colonies; teaching the slaves morality and industry, when they were in most of the Colonies neglected by all others; and even at a time when the system of bondage was less mildly administered than at present, less alleviated by the kindness of enlightened and benevolent proprietors, and less controlled by the careful oversight of inferior agents, they were constantly enforcing the duty of

respect and submission to masters, on principles of conscience, and under the sanctions of religion. And we may ask with confidence, where is the instance in which the Missionaries, slaves, or free people of colour of our Societies, have ever been connected with the slightest tumult or disorder? If any such instance is known, it is not known to us; and we should be happy to be informed of it. We declare, that no such information was ever received at this Office,—that this is a charge we had never to meet, except in the case of the insurrection of the slaves in Barbadoes, where, for 17 months previous, we had not a single Missionary, and at no time more than a very small congregation confined to Bridge Town. That affair, as all now know, did not, upon investigation, in the least implicate us. With equal confidence may we appeal to Demarara; where not a slave connected with our Societies joined the insurgents, but all set the best example of Christian behaviour.

The peaceful and beneficent operations of our Missions amidst suspicions, and, in many cases, blind and bitter opposition, for a space of more than 30 years, ought to entitle us to some confidence as instructors of slaves in the British Colonies; and however readily evil surmises and rumours may be originated and indulged by those who know little of us, our Missionary la-

bours, and their effects, in this we are encouraged, that in all the old Colonies where our Missions have been longest known, they have secured for themselves fast and faithful friends among the most influential and respectable residents.

If this were not the case, how could we have had access to so many estates, with the consent and encouragement of the proprietors, attorneys, and managers ? And would the respectable classes have contributed so liberally, as they have done, to the erection of our chapels, many of which are very large, and, in some of the islands, four, five, six, and eight in number, unless they had been satisfied as to the doctrines preached, and the effects produced ? How is it that in so many instances we have the kind patronage of several of the colonial clergy, if they did not regard our Missionaries as filling up an important department of public service in the Colonies, to which they, from their number, and other duties, are confessedly inadequate ?

We shall rejoice in the increase of the number of clergy in the Colonies, and the extension of the benefits of Christian instruction. We dispute with no one who thinks that the slaves might have more suitable instructors than our own ; the field is unhappily too wide to be cultivated by the labourers likely to be sent out

for many years to come. But this we are obliged to say, when we see ourselves aspersed by some of those very persons, the slaves of whose estates our Missionaries have been improving, but who, from being resident in England, have taken little cognizance of the fact; and by those who, residing in parts of Colonies in which the benefits of Missionary instructions have not been introduced, or have been counteracted by hostility, are entirely unacquainted with the subject on which they write;—that every effect which a wise, provident, and benevolent proprietor would wish to see produced among his people, has resulted from the labours of the Missionaries whenever they have met with suitable encouragement. They have been made more industrious; they have been saved from immoralities, injurious to health and exertion; polygamy has been greatly checked, and population thereby promoted; marriage has created the domestic relations, and connected children with the care of parents on both sides. *Principle* has been brought into operation in the place of coercion; punishments have been lessened, and on several estates the whip has been entirely banished. We say nothing now of the still higher consideration of many thousands of them having been brought under the influence of the Christian religion, and to the enjoyment

of the comforts and hopes which it inspires. Of all these facts we have abundant testimonies from most respectable authority in the different islands; and which are at all times open for inspection, by those who are disposed to seek for information.

IMPROVEMENT IN THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF THE SLAVES.—To those who think that religious principles are the basis of all improvement in the condition of our fellow creatures of any class, we can appeal with confidence for the proof of our success; and can state, that in the minds of the many thousand negroes we have enumerated, and in upwards of 10,000 children of this description, 6,000 of whom at least are taught in Sunday schools, and the remainder catechized without being taught to read, either from objections on the part of their owners, or from the want of opportunity, the principles of religion have displaced the darkness and ignorance of African superstition, and that they are made acquainted with all the leading truths of the Christian religion, and their application to the heart and to the life. This, considering their natural ignorance and their peculiar circumstances, has been a work of no small labour and sacrifice; a work of prayer, and tears, and persevering exertion by the men,

whose names have been cast out as evil, and of whom of late in some of the Colonies the most opprobrious epithets have been thought fitting and characteristic. That work however has been achieved, and from year to year rays of indirect light and influence have been shed into the surrounding mass of ignorance and vice, from those who have exemplified in their holy lives the principles of Christianity, and imparted what they have received of its sacred truths to their families and associates.

The habits of immorality which formerly prevailed without a check, have been in a great number of instances entirely removed; and honesty, sobriety, and industry have been fixed in them as opposite habits, and have operated, as all good examples must do, to raise the standard of morals, and to promote a somewhat better morality in even the uninstructed. Punishments have unquestionably been lessened, wherever religious instruction has prevailed. Of this the testimonies which the Committee have received are numerous. Of these facts we shall shortly subjoin some statements.

The institution of marriage has been a great and constant object with the Committee, and through difficulties which none but those who are intimately acquainted with the West Indies can estimate, it has been enforced, till in our old

Societies it has become a settled practice, and accounted an "honourable estate." Where it has gone hand in hand with the inculcation of religious principles, though unsanctioned by law, and of course a religious ceremony only, it has been observed in the majority of cases with sanctity, and has had the same moralizing effect as in all Christian societies. The domestic affections have been awakened; home, though the hut of a negro, has been regarded under new and milder associations; and parents and children have been connected in all the unchecked strength of a moral and hallowed relationship. It will have been seen above, that polygamy is entirely and without exception forbidden to all our negro members and catechumens; no man having two wives is admitted into Society; he must choose one, and be formally married to her; and any deviation from this purity is, by our rules, followed by expulsion. With this formidable evil the Missionaries have had long and seriously to struggle. If the doors of our Society were opened to the negroes who have two or more wives, or who change one at pleasure, the number of our members might be doubled in a few months; but the Committee have acted on the principle of not lowering the rule of the Gospel to circumstances, in any degree, being persuaded that by keeping this up to its true standard,

happiness and morality, and every strong and healthful virtue would rise with it. Their attention is now still more sedulously directed to meet the difficult cases, and the opposition to marriage, which arise occasionally from different quarters. In confirmation of these points, we request attention to the following extracts from communications to the Committee, and to others.

Extracts of a Letter to a Member of the Committee, from a West India Proprietor now deceased, who held a Law Office under the Crown in one of the Islands, dated July 20, 1818.

Confining myself to my own observations, I hesitate not to declare, that the happiest results have attended the indefatigable exertions of the Missionaries wherever they have been tolerated with any degree of fairness and civility; and that, if duly appreciated, the interest of the planter has been greatly promoted by their admission among the gangs of the different plantations. Let any unprejudiced man look back to the state of the slaves before the Missionaries undertook the work of redemption and reform, and let him fix his eye attentively on the present condition of those who have received their doctrine, for this is ocular demonstration. These are palpable proofs to all, who do not wilfully blind their eyes to truth and fact. Instead of the brutal appearance, the morbid insensibility, the vagrancy, the vices, the nakedness, and worse, the filth which formerly indicated the degraded creature; instead of that stupid sensuality which stamped him as a disgrace to humanity, what is now his condition? And that the alterations are derived from the Methodists let any one, who has calmly and honestly marked the difference, deny what I now dispassionately maintain;—that it has been a revelation of light and benefits most

creditable to the fitness, the industry, and the Godliness of those who have so laudably persevered in the work, that the great first movement of the human mind, and consciousness of its immortality has been awakened from the clod; that with the religious the moral feeling has sprung up; that right and wrong discriminately now take their places; that the fear of God and his omnipresence hangs over even the negro in the wood, and his former propensities to theft, drunkenness, and other vices thereby greatly corrected—that his domestic and social habits have been highly strengthened and improved—and what above all will be perhaps considered most to the point, that his duty to his master, instead of having been shaken or seduced, is confirmed upon a much better assurance than ever, upon a principle of obedience inculcated by Scripture, not by the authority of the driver. I speak confidently, because I speak from several years' experience in my own property and person. When, in 1810, I went to visit a plantation I had then in St. Vincent, I found, that during an absence from 1804, a dreadful system of mismanagement had reduced my estate to a wreck, and sent many of the slaves to a premature grave. The Methodists, whom I had ever encouraged from a sense of my own interest, when on the spot myself, had been discarded, and the negroes precluded their society, on the groundless charges, first, that they prevented the slaves from applying their time to the cultivation of their grounds in aid of their subsistence, and led them to superstitious preaching and psalm-singing which they could not possibly understand, and which tended to all mischief; secondly, that the parsons, (as they are called,) took money from the negroes, and graduated them each according to his ability to pay. On these charges, (which I shall more particularly notice,) the preachers had been for some time dismissed, and on my return the surviving objects who presented themselves to me exhibited nothing but sorrow, sickness, and despair; and they looked rather like creatures dug up from their graves, than men in the natural decay of life.

hastening towards them. The first thing in my mind was to resuscitate the spirits with hope, to excite a re-action in the animal chord, as well as on nerves and muscles ; and I, therefore, instantly sent for the Methodist preacher, and solicited his assistance, knowing the immediate influence it would have on the gang. The rites of sepulture and baptism were thereby re-established, the relative ties in families were enforced by admonition, and when disregarded or broken, were always marked with a particular visitation : and here it is my bounden duty to declare, that although called upon at every funeral, (for many necessarily for some time followed such dilapidation,) at every birth, and on all other occasions voluntarily attending, I never could prevail on any single member of the society to accept one farthing of money, in recompence for their journeys, their pains, and devotion. The spur of zeal warmed them to all exertion. The negroes could so feel and appreciate it ; and, from the gratuitous sincerity of their teachers, naturally caught sincerity. Attention followed in consequence to what they were enjoined in observance—continenency between man and woman superseded the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes,—the child could find a father in a father's protection, which was not before the case in their rambling amours. The hovel became a house ; forethought and industry united them to make it comfortable ; instead of the rum bottle, some neat article of clothing, or useful appendage to the family, came from town, from their savings or profits of market : to be made a Christian, and attend chapel clean and neat in person, touched the pride of a being, who before held his existence in solitary selfishness, without one social idea coupled to it : and I am not afraid to use the expression, a most harmonious and interesting association of refinement and religion soon displayed itself, alike in their persons, their habits and morals. The natural result was health, in promoted cleanliness—propogation, in well-cemented families—security in property to themselves and masters, in the discountenance of former tricks

and thefts—and to the point, the great point, the primum mobile, an increasing capital, in an increasing gang to the proprietor. These are facts provable and ostensible, wherever the Missions of the Methodists have been tolerated with common complacency.

*From David Grieve, M. D., dated Antigua, St. John's,
March 31, 1818.*

From a thorough knowledge of the Missionaries, I am well assured they are so far from shrinking from an inquiry into their conduct, that, on the contrary, they most earnestly wish it; conscious, were this done, their enemies would be ashamed, and many of them converted to friends: for it is very remarkable, that on the estates where the Missionaries labour (I now speak of Antigua), that from those negroes who belong to the Society are selected such as are appointed to offices of trust—head coopers, carpenters, drivers, nay, even to supply in many cases the places of the white servants, and to have the keys of the stores committed to them. And what is more, there is not an instance, that I know of, where such confidential slave, being a Methodist, ever betrayed his trust.

From the Hon. Wm. Wylly, Esq. Attorney General in New Providence, dated New Providence, April 6, 1818.

I have resided in New Providence upwards of twenty-seven years, and have been either Chief Justice or Attorney General since the year 1797. I have been acquainted with all the clergymen of the Established Church, and with most of the Wesleyan Missionaries, that have been sent hither since the year 1790. To the best of my recollection, the Wesleyan Missionaries came first to this Colony about the year 1800, at which time I verily believe there was but very little religion to be found among the lower classes of our people. During my residence here, the ministers of the Established Church have, (with only one exception,) been learned and pious men; their

number, however, has been very inadequate to the wants of the Colony; and candour obliges to declare, that the habits and modes of instruction peculiar to the Methodist Missionaries, are best adapted to the present state of society in the out-islands of this government. Neither have the laws of this Colony made any permanent provision for the support of the established clergy; and I am therefore decidedly of opinion, that not only our slaves and free people of colour, but the lower classes of the white inhabitants, might be in danger of reverting to a state of barbarous irreligion, if they should be deprived of the assistance of their spiritual guides.

From W. W. Rawlins, Esq. Member of the Assembly, dated St. Kitt's, March 19, 1818.

I have resided for the last two years in St. Kitt's, and during that time (though a member of the Church of England,) have regularly attended the Wesleyan chapels, and can therefore speak with more confidence as to the doctrines delivered there, than those who merely speak from the report of others. There is a Wesleyan chapel situated close to one of my estates, and I always feel happy when I see it well filled with my own negroes, and regret I have not as yet been able to persuade the whole number to attend regularly, as I am perfectly convinced that those who are in the Methodist Society are at least more outwardly moral in their conduct, even though no actual change of heart should as yet have taken place; and I am convinced it would be for the advantage of every proprietor to encourage, as much as possible, the pious labours of the Missionaries, as they never fail earnestly to enforce the exhortation of St. Paul, that "servants are to obey in all things their masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God."

I can instance my own estates, the Walk, and Dry Hill, on which I have about four hundred slaves, and though they are altogether considered as a remarkably good set of negroes,

yet those that are in the Methodist Society are by far the most decent and respectable.

*From W. Savage, Esq. Magistrate, &c. Kingston, Jamaica,
March 18, 1818.*

I never heard, nor do I believe, that any one of the Missionaries belonging to the Wesleyan Society who has had permission to preach in this city, has in any one instance preached seditious or immoral discourses. I occasionally attend the chapel here, and uniformly hear discourses such as every person of a religious turn of mind must approve. The Missionaries uniformly recommend industry, sobriety, integrity, and a solemn observance of the Sabbath.

I have good reason to believe that many slaves, as well as free blacks, and people of colour, have materially benefited by the great attention that has been paid to them by the Missionaries: their moral habits have been greatly improved; a more solemn observance of the Sabbath; refraining from swearing; and a decency in the interment of the dead, which was formerly conducted in a very noisy and indecent manner.

"I know of no slaves who have been considered as belonging to the Wesleyan Society conspiring against their owners or employers; and I have generally to observe, that no Ministers of the Gospel, that I have known here, have conducted themselves with more propriety or zeal to promote the glory of God in the good of mankind. The Missionaries here appear to walk with careful steps, and uniformly avoid intermeddling with political opinions.

*From Stephen Drew, Esq. Barrister at Law, dated Belmont,
(St. Ann's,) Jamaica, March 12, 1818.*

It is very difficult for any one to speak correctly of the moral condition of slaves, on any property which is not under his own controul, I can therefore only speak of my own. When I first took possession of it in right of my wife, I found the

negroes in a very demoralized state : I used every exertion in my power to reclaim them, but I could produce no great effect until I requested, in October last, the assistance of the Wesleyan Minister, then stationed at Spanish Town, who, though at the distance of five-and-thirty miles, undertook the attempt with readiness, and in a manner the most disinterested. In the short space of three months the effect has been very great, the whole of my slaves having, at their own request, been baptized ; I believe that they are under strong religious impressions, taking pleasure in a voluntary attendance at worship on the Sabbath, and at all other practicable times : several of them are leading very exemplary lives, and have of their own accord broken off their former licentious connexions, and have determined to unite themselves only in the way of marriage. This probably will soon be general among them ; and every thinking mind will at once perceive the vast moral improvement that will probably result from this alone, which, among the Methodists, is an indispensable requisite for admission into their Society. ~ On the whole, I look on my slaves as much improved in behaviour, very much more attached to me, and greatly enhanced in value, by the instructions they have received.

From John Huggins, Esq. Nevis, April 26, 1818.

In this island I am happy to say that no resistance has ever appeared against the promulgation of the doctrines of the Wesleyan Methodists ; nor indeed have the public authorities ever interfered with that quiet diffusion of knowledge which for many years has been adopted by the Preachers, and which is so necessary to enlighten the minds of the slaves, and free coloured population ; they are enabled therefore to inculcate the holy tenets of the Christian faith with the best effect.

I truly believe that the minds of the higher orders, (and they of course possess the greatest number of slaves) are convinced

of the necessity of religious instruction, and of the wonderful reform in morals and manners which may result from it.

From every information I can collect, I think I may fairly state, that on those estates where the negroes for the most part resort to the chapel, a decorum of behaviour in general, respectful submission to the orders of their masters, and a proper attention to cleanliness and decency of appearance, characterizes them. Indeed, from the meliorated situation in which the slaves are placed, and by the quiet and undisturbed establishment of chapels in most of the parishes, a progressive improvement appears to be working its way amongst that class of people : in proof of this I would bring forward the few instances of outrage committed on each other, in comparison of what took place twenty years ago ; and above all, the very decent, quiet, and in many instances the religious manner in which the Sabbath and the festivals are now observed. Can I add a stronger testimony in favour of this assertion than that our privy council, on Christmas last, deemed it unnecessary to call out the usual guard to preserve the peace during the holidays ?

*From a Planter in Eleuthera, one of the Bahama Islands, dated
18th April, 1818.*

I AM a native of the island ; and I can say of a truth, that before the Wesleyan Missionaries commenced their labours amongst us, we were a people who had none to care for our souls.

We never had a church built, nor a clergyman appointed to us, although these settlements are of more than one hundred years standing.

Here we lived, on these different islands, without God and without Christ in the world. It is impossible to describe the heights of wickedness at which we had arrived, when the Wesleyan Missionaries first visited these neglected settlements. Drunkenness, quarrelling, swearing, sabbath-breaking, and licentiousness, in all their hateful forms, were practised with

greediness; and also every other vice which follows this wretched catalogue. Indeed, this place might vie in practice with any polluted spot under Heaven.

Picture to yourself hundreds of souls, of both whites and blacks, lying in this most deplorable situation, without any to help them,—without provision of any kind made for them, either by church or state, to lead them in the way of truth and righteousness, or to teach them the plan of salvation; but here we groped and stumbled, on the dark mountains of error and iniquity. But since the Wesleyan Missionaries have visited us, such a change has taken place as answers the description of the Prophet;—“The wilderness and the solitary places are glad.”

On the settlement where I live, these Missionaries have established themselves in a most peaceful manner. A chapel has been built, which will contain from three to four hundred persons. Many who had lived in sin, and had grown grey in it, have, by the instrumentality of these Missionaries, been brought to a saving knowledge of God. The inhabitants of this settlement, or at least the principal part, are now an ornament to the Christian name, and above two hundred of them are in church fellowship with each other, the greater part of whom are whites. The reformation has spread to three settlements besides this; and a great change has been effected there also in the morals of the people.

I saw a number of slaves; and I can say, that those among them who have paid most attention to the lectures of the Missionaries are the most dutiful, faithful, and trustworthy. The vices which were prevalent among them are not to be heard of among those whom the Missionaries approve as members of their religious community. No language is too strong to describe their moral improvement.

*From the Hon. G. R. Porter, M. D. Member of Council, &c.
dated Tortola, March 11, 1818.*

Although I have always thought the Wesleyan Mission a peculiar blessing to these islands, I am not a Methodist, because, though I greatly admire, esteem, and respect them as a body of Christians (whose doctrines I cordially embrace), and am fully persuaded they have done, and still are doing much good in the world, yet there are some things required in their church discipline to which I do not think myself bound to conform, and to which strict conformity is required by all who are received into their connexion.

A very large proportion of the slaves who attend the Chapel here, and so may be said to be under the instruction of the Wesleyan Missionaries, are not members of their Society; and even amongst those who are received into connexion, there must be some who enter into it uninfluenced by religious motives: from these two classes little improvement in moral conduct can rationally be looked for; this, however, the observation of many years has proved to me to be a fact which admits of no doubt, that, generally speaking, those who enter into the Methodists' Society are under restraint from which others are free. Their conduct, I have reason to believe is narrowly watched by their leaders, and on conviction of any gross immorality they are expelled, and they more fear public expulsion from that Society than any punishment likely to be inflicted upon them by those under whose care (as slaves) they are placed, and so far let the motive which induces them to join the Society be what it may, even these, so long as they continue members, do certainly more abstain from open immorality of conduct than others not influenced by similar restraints; but I can with pleasure add, that many who before they entered the Society were notorious as drunkards, thieves, liars, &c. &c. have been so far changed, that I believe them to act as considering themselves under the eye of God, and as

accountable to him for their conduct; and, as a necessary consequence, these are become more faithful and diligent towards their owners.

It appears to me too evident to be questioned, that the moral conduct of the slaves through the whole island is much altered for the better since the Mission has been established here. Sunday, although now by no means observed as it ought to be, is not so scandalously violated as before that time. No instances of attempted arson have occurred, as formerly ; and the breaking open of stores, which used to be frequent, is now a rare occurrence ; for this evident alteration for the better, I am aware of no efficient cause which can be assigned, except the change produced in the conduct of the slaves by the preaching of the Gospel by the Missionaries.

From a Letter from the Hon. J. Ross, Member of Council in Grenada, to Joseph Butterworth, Esq. M.P., dated Aberdeen, Dec. 18, 1823.

Of the Missionaries in general who have been in Grenada, since I became acquainted with them, it is but justice to say, that they have been pious and zealous men, and that I have never known or heard of their preaching any improper doctrine to the slaves ; on the contrary, I have always heard them inculcate a cheerful submission to the duties of the station in which they were placed, and to be contented, satisfied, and obedient.

Extract of a Letter from Mr. Hyde to the Committee, dated Antigua, June 18, 1822.

There is now a general understanding throughout the island, that none can be admitted into the Society, but such as are single, or those who will engage to marry ; and they never think of applying, without a right understanding between themselves on this subject. They see and feel it to be a great pri-

vilege to be thus united. It seems to give them an interest and importance in society, which they possessed not before.

The compact is precisely as sacred with them, as if enforced by all the obligations of civil law. It is the operation of principles than which nothing can be more binding. It would, however, be a most desirable thing to have the marriage of slaves sanctioned and protected by the legislature. That something, however, in this way, will be done for them shortly, I have no doubt, the policy of the thing is becoming so apparent. Several planters have said to me, that they viewed our marrying the slaves as one of the best measures the Missionaries ever introduced into the island. This opinion is gaining strength daily. Sometimes I have inquired for the ground of this opinion, and have generally received answers to this effect. 1. "It has very much diminished our trouble on the estates, for before marriage was so generally introduced amongst them, we had endless disputes and fightings between the negro women, who rivalled each other, and the men, but now we have scarcely any thing of this." 2. "Formerly we might send down time after time to the negro houses in the evening if we wanted any of them for any thing particular, and never find them at home, but now you may send down to the houses of the married people, and be almost sure of finding them." 3. "It has given them many domestic habits, which are likely to be of considerable advantage to the estates; for instance, many of them are now building larger houses, or improving their old ones, that they may live more constantly and comfortably together." 4. "It promotes their health and usefulness. Formerly they were running in different directions after they had done their work at night, and often came home in the morning before sunrise, after walking many miles in the night and morning dew, sick, or so jaded, that they could not attend to their work; but this is not the case with the married people on the estate." 5. "It is the best way of enhancing the

property by increasing the number of the slaves upon it, for it is well known that those negroes who live the most faithfully with each other are the most prolific," &c. &c.

These, you will perceive, are observations calculated to have weight, and when viewed in connexion with an extending religious influence, which is very apparent amongst the higher ranks of this community, to secure the introduction of marriage in these Colonies, according to the established forms of law at home. That the negroes in the island are now capable of understanding the obligations of such a state—of appreciating its value, and enjoying all the relations and affections arising from a state so honourable in all, is evident to those who are willing to see it. It is a pleasing fact, that in all the marriages which have been celebrated at Parham since I came, I can only recollect two instances in which a separation has taken place between the married parties in consequence of adultery. I have lately married many couples between whom there had been no criminal intercourse,—a new thing amongst the slaves here!

You may rely upon it that the strict enforcing of marriage, is one of the best measures that can be insisted upon by the Missionaries. On this subject I feel myself bold to speak with a degree of positiveness, having under my care one of the largest Societies of negroes in the West Indies, amongst whom I have not failed to enforce marriage with so much strictness, that I have none in Society now but such as are either married or single, or published to be married. I have married nearly 500 couples, and I suppose the banns of fifty couples are publishing or published.

*Extract from a Letter of Mr. Shrewsbury to the Committee,
dated Barbadoes, July 31, 1822.*

When I came to this island two years and a half ago, I found several couples who had been married by my predecessor: since I have been here, there has not been a single instance of un-

faithfulness, nor the smallest complaint from either party of unkindness or neglect of any relative duty. On the contrary, I have gone to the little huts, and without questioning them, have made my own observations. In every instance I have seen mutual affection and kindness evinced;—in every instance I have seen cleanliness and comfort go hand in hand with piety.

The effect of the introduction of marriage among the slaves is stated in the following extracts of letters still more recently received.

Mr. Gilgrass, of Tortola, writes;

Those slaves who are married, and keep their vow inviolate, are more industrious, respectable, healthy, careful, and generally better off in their circumstances; pay more attention to the health, comfort, and instruction of their children, than those do who are not married.

Mr. Hyde, of Montserratt, writes;

As to the influence which marriage has on their domestic comfort; it checks their otherwise unrestrained and unhallowed passions; transforms animal passion into connubial affection; and raises both parties in their own esteem and in the esteem of others,—for those slaves are invariably the most respected by their fellows, as well as others, who are married: it leads to a decency and neatness in their persons which they had not before, and turns their habitations into places of domestic cleanliness and order; and it gives them a greater interest in the health and instruction of their children. After they are married, they view their children as lawfully begotten, and not bastards, as I have heard it remarked by them; and this increases their affection for them, and arouses into more active play those parental instincts and industrious habits. They live much more peaceably after marriage than before, and are much

more seldom to be found from home at night. Thus the master is saved much trouble, and the health of the slave is much promoted. The women, also, are far more fruitful where there is this constancy : they will often have from ten to fifteen, and sometimes more children ; whereas, those women who lead irregular lives have sickly children, are very subject to abortion, often destroy their unborn infants, and are frequently a great trouble, and little or no profit to the estates.

The children who are the fruit of unlawful intercourse are mostly to be seen in dirt and rags, and are often driven to and fro for their victuals. This I know to be the fact, that the mother will frequently say to the child, " Go to your father for your breakfast, I have nothing to give you." The hungry child, goes to the father, and asks for something to eat; but the father says, " I have nothing for you, let your mother feed you ;" and thus the disappointed child is often doomed to suffer. But where the parties are married, the wants of the child are the wants of its parents ; and they would rather go without food themselves, than that their offspring should have a want of this kind unsupplied.

Mr. Parkin, of St. Eustatius, writes ;

In this island the influence of marriage is very great, as it relates to the domestic comforts of the slaves. They live in peace, and feel an interest in each others welfare, and are more kind to their children than those who are not married ; at the same time they think that marriage raises them in their degraded condition.

Mr. Morgan, of St. Christopher's, writes ;

The married members of our Societies in general certainly feel the sacredness of the obligation. They have but one home and one family ; whereas the generality of the negroes, not under religious instruction, have several homes, and several family branches : the consequence is, that they are strangers to domestic comfort, and the poor children, of course, are

awfully neglected and depraved. Our people are much concerned for the salvation of their children.

The above statements are made, not merely to disperse misrepresentations, but to shew to gentlemen connected with the West Indies what may be effected in the moral condition of the slave population of those Colonies by exertion and perseverance. To a large class of benevolent and enlightened persons of this description we are happy to know that we address ourselves. To those who are indifferent to Christianity among the negroes, because they are hostile to its influence over themselves ; who love and practice immorality, and hate the truth for the light which exposes, and the influence which checks it ; we say nothing. Not only the Wesleyan Missionaries, but Missionaries of every description, and the pious and zealous Clergy, wherever found in the islands, have had to meet their hostility, and to suffer their taunts ; and by them they have been obstructed in their Christian labours. We know the principle which produces this hostility, however covered, and whatever mask it wears, because we know the men and their communications. But a great number of persons resident in the Colonies, and of proprietors at home, are of a very different description ; and whether we or others become co-workers with them in

diffusing the light and blessedness of Christianity over the pagan mind of the West Indian negro, we know that it is an object which lies nearest their hearts to render their connection with this class of our fellow-men the means of promoting their spiritual and eternal benefit; and that to them all information which tends to shew the practicability of their case being reached will be acceptable.

Called to consider the negro character, and to notice his capabilities, for a long period of time, we have no hesitation in saying, that the slave population of the West Indies are worthy of the Christian sympathies of all who are connected with them. Their natural peaceable disposition has been proved in the quiet of the Colonies, so seldom agitated. Where, in the history of states holding great numbers of men in a state of bondage, do we find so few commotions? revolts so rare? and obedience so implicit and cheerful? We believe in no instance. And this circumstance will not be overlooked by those who now, more intently than ever, propose to promote among them the principles of Christianity. Wherever any degree of moral care, and patient instruction, has been afforded, they have rewarded the toil; and their improvement, considering their deep ignorance, the strength of their passions, and the fewness of

their opportunities, has been such as to afford the highest gratification to those who have had the work of instructing them, and to those proprietors who have encouraged them in it. They are intelligent, grateful, docile, affectionate; sensible of all kindness, but especially of the kindness which opens to them the fountain of salvation, and puts them in possession of the principles, the comforts, and hopes of religion. Thousands of them, in the morality of their lives, in their respectful submission as servants, in their tenderness as parents, in their filial duty as children, have gladdened the eye and the heart of those who have been connected with them, wherever the eye could be attracted by moral objects, or the heart could be interested in the conversion of a "soul from the error of his way." They have lived the life, and they have died the death of the righteous. The work of instructing them is not only hopeful, but its success is certain, under God's blessing. If we will apply the means, the benefit must follow; great, united, and persevering effort is certain in its effect, and will cover the Colonies with those interesting moral scenes, which already, here and there, like Oases in the desert, present their salutary streams and their living vegetation. An object more noble, more intimately connected with interests at once so

inspiring to Christian benevolence, and connected so essentially with the interests of proprietors, and, of the Colonies, considered as parts of the British empire, cannot be placed before that part of the community immediately interested in the West Indies, and the well-disposed part of society at large.

Those who are hostile to the religious instruction of the negroes, will, it is true, now urge the case of Demarara. The argument from this case is, however, entirely on the other side. Whether any settled conspiracy existed among the slaves there, is not yet made out; or whether the whole was not the result of the excitement of the moment, arising from misinformation, or probably want of information, as to the subjects of discussion respecting them in England. Let it, however, be taken in the way which makes the slaves most culpable, we may ask, had religious instruction been so encouraged in Demarara,—were the slaves so leavened with the influence of Christian principles,—that the fault of the insurrection was to be laid at the door of such instruction? We know the facts better; and we may speak the more decidedly, because as to the insurrection in Demarara we stand quite unimplicated, not one of the members of our Society of 1216 persons, chiefly slaves, having been connected with it, and those few estates to

which our Missionaries had been allowed access having given an example not only of quiet, but of attachment to their masters. But Missionary exertions have been met with decided hostility in Demarara by a great number of planters; the negroes were sealed up in ignorance and vice; and those who could be instructed were but partially so, for want of encouragement. The patient labour, which needs every facility to procure success, had not been exerted, and could not be exerted to produce its full effect. If a few slaves professing Christianity were then seduced from the path of duty, where is the wonder? A vast majority of even these partially instructed religious slaves can be exhibited, who resisted the seduction. There had been insurrections and tumults in Demarara before, when there were no professedly religious slaves to blame. If from Demarara we direct our attention to the Colonies, such as Antigua and other islands, where instruction has been encouraged, and a great mass of the neglected population influenced by it, the news of the discussions in England reached them also; excitement was observed, as was natural, but no tumults were either felt or feared. Unquestionably there are dangers in the colonies; but those dangers lie in continuing to seal up the negro population in ignorance, and leaving them under dispositions which,

in seasons of excitement, will lead to excesses. Connected as the Colonies are with a country where the press is free, even to licentiousness, the principles, and the discussions which occur in Parliament, and in the public prints, cannot be kept wholly from them. There are free blacks who can read, and who inhabit the towns, who have the means of all this information ; and on the uninstructed mind evil-disposed persons of this description may produce, and will produce, great mischief. What, then, is the preventive? Nothing, but to treat the negroes as rational and moral beings ; to fill those minds with truth, which will otherwise receive error ; to provide against the introduction of mischievous principles, by occupying the mind with salutary ones ; and to counteract bad examples by encouraging good ones ; and thus to prepare the population for those changes which it is the interest of all parties, and certainly a great national duty, to promote.

Thus we have laid open, with frankness, the plans of the Society for which we act ; and if we offer any agency which that Society can supply for promoting the religious instruction of the negro population, we again beg leave to say, that neither we, nor any person connected with the Society, have, in any sense whatever, the slightest private interest, or party objects, to

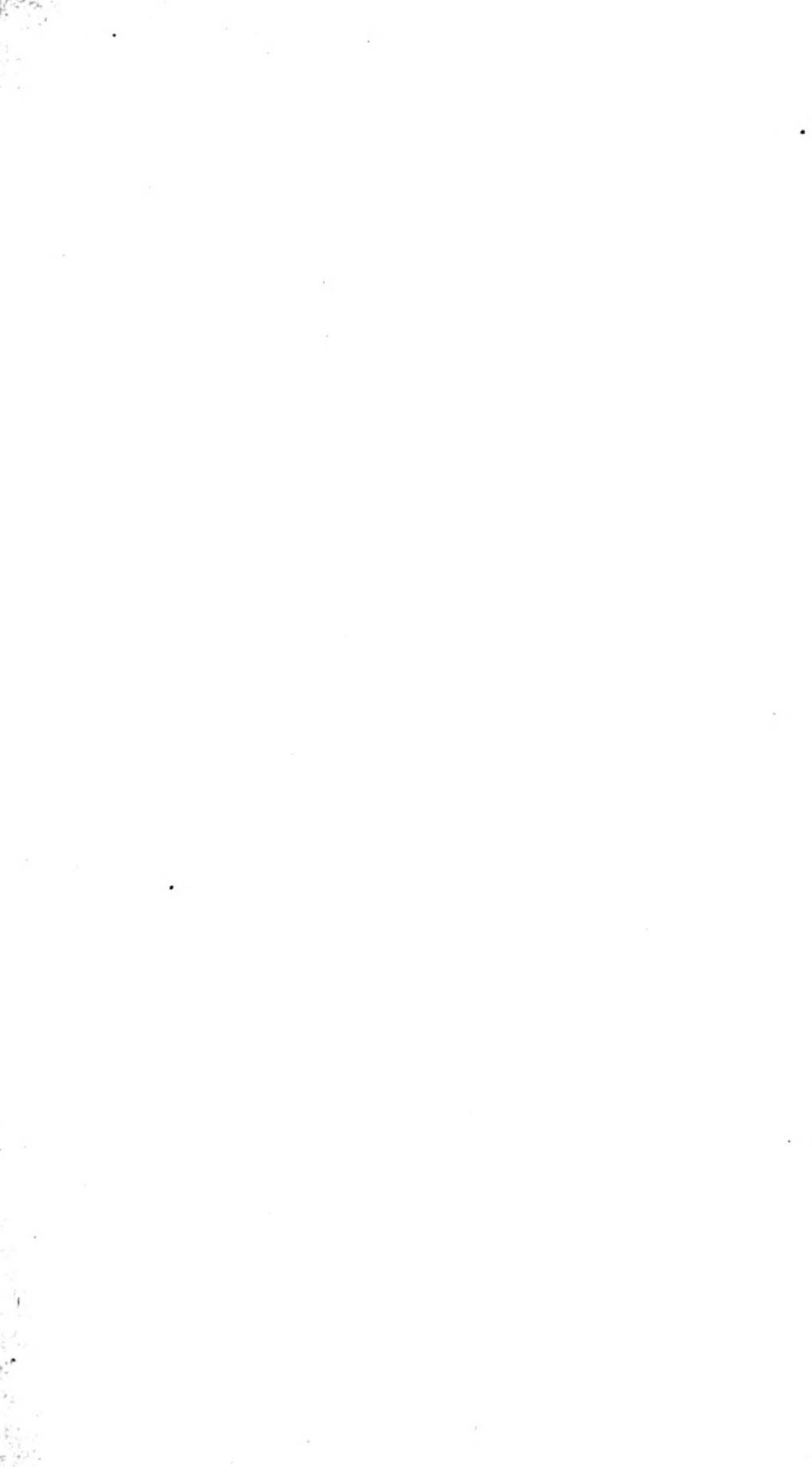
promote. The Wesleyan Mission to the West Indies was commenced on a principle of pure benevolence : the funds which support it are the voluntary expressions of that feeling. The Mission has grown upon us from year to year, and is still enlarging. It now exhibits, in large, peaceable, and moral religious societies ; in regular marriage; in the abolition of polygamy ; in the promotion of the health, and temporal comfort and interest of the slave; what may be effected by large and united exertion. Should the wise and moderate plans of his Majesty's Government be carried into effect, the efficiency of our own, and all other Missionary and other exertions for their improvement, will be greatly promoted. The abolition of Sunday toil, and Sunday markets, will be a public proclamation of the obligation of the Decalogue, and give it sanction ; and time for efficient instruction, and the decent observance of God's worship, will be thus obtained. The granting to marriage the sanction of law, will render this difficult branch of the work of a Missionary the more practicable, and close the gate which pours out the most destructive stream of immorality over the islands. The preventing of those sales which now frequently separate man and wife, and parents and children, for ever, must and ought to follow upon marriage, and will add to it another sanction

and a strong inducement. The fixing the price of manumission prudently on the one hand, and moderately on the other, will encourage the habit of industry, and thus connects itself with morality. The allowing the instructed slave to give evidence on oath, is both a proper respect paid to the Christian religion, which we all profess, and must operate to encourage it, by making a proper distinction between a Christian and a pagan. We advert to these points, because they are not merely civil ones, but connected with the progress and success of religious instruction; with the morality which all sober persons desire to promote, and which all enlightened planters, as well as others, are anxious to witness, as the only sure basis of the prosperity and welfare of the Colonies. What just interests they may compromise; what difficulties may arise from their adoption, are left to a wise and just legislation. They are points into which, as a Missionary Society, we do not at all enter; and have only to wish and pray, that, where objects and interests so great are involved, they may be approached and discussed with temper and moderation. Independent of all these measures, the Committee holds on its course of endeavouring to benefit the natives by the promotion of the knowledge and influence of Christianity; but having had long experience

of the difficulties and hindrances which exist to the success of endeavours to accomplish this object, we cannot withhold the testimony which that experience enables us to give as to the necessary connection of such measures as those to which we have adverted, with the accomplishment of those great and interesting results,—the banishment of pagan ignorance and vice from the negroes of the West Indies, and their conversion into a moral, industrious, and Christian peasantry.

All communications on the subject of our Missions, if addressed to the Secretaries, Wesleyan Mission-Office, Hatton-Garden, London, will meet with a prompt attention.

Wesleyan Mission-House,
77, Hatton-Garden, London,
January 1st, 1824.





COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



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